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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SHENYANG 000128

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DEPARTMENT FOR INR, PRM, INL, EAP/CM, EAP/K, G/TIP

E.O. 12958: DECL: TEN YEARS AFTER KOREAN UNIFICATION

TAGS: [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [PGOV](#) [KWMN](#) [KN](#) [KS](#) [CH](#)

SUBJECT: PRC-DPRK: NORTH KOREAN BORDER-CROSSERS; DRUGS; NEW
BORDER FENCING; PLA ACTIVITY

Classified By: CONSUL GENERAL STEPHEN B. WICKMAN. REASONS:
1.4(b)/(d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Post contacts report that, at least anecdotally, the numbers of North Korean border-crossers encountered this year are fewer than last, though the overall numbers and reasons for the decline are unclear. Jilin Province's ongoing anti-drug campaign is netting more seizures of illegal narcotics, particularly methamphetamines, from localities along the PRC-DPRK border. Local officials are highly uncomfortable discussing specifics. Further south, PRC authorities near Dandong have extended their border fencing in an area where Post has also noticed a more robust level of military activity compared with previous visits in past months, though this is likely unrelated. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Poloff traveled to a number of points along the PRC-DPRK border, including Dandong, Donggang and Hushan (June 25-27), as well as Yanji, Nanping and Chongshan (June 18-21). This is the second of two cables on the border in mid-2007; the first focused on border trade and PRC inspections thereof.

NORTH KOREAN BORDER-CROSSERS: SOME ANECDOTAL OBSERVATIONS

¶3. (C) During a June 26 visit to Donggang, a county-level port city nearly 40 kilometers south of Dandong, Poloff spotted on the walls of many of the shipyards lining the thin two-lane road connecting Dandong and Donggang a number of banners and other posters exhorting residents to "strictly combat human smuggling" (yanli daji toudu). A sign on the exterior wall of one shipyard along the Yalu River warned locals (roughly translated): "Once caught, alien smugglers hurt themselves, their families and others." Others mentioned drug and human smuggling together; many called on locals to help create an "orderly, safe border." Unlike all others Poloff came across, a banner further south festooning a People's Armed Police (PAP) building in Donggang specifically warned against illegal smuggling that involved North Korean goods and aliens. Although Donggang falls under Dandong's administration, no posters/banners are to be seen in Dandong itself--and thus by the thousands of tourists that visit during the summer months.

14. (C) Further north, contacts in Yanbian and Shenyang continue to relate that the numbers of North Korean border-crossers they are personally encountering this year are fewer than last. Father Jin (protect) of the Ping'an Church just outside of Yanji, for example, told Poloff on June 26 that "not many" border-crossers had come to his church this month, much less in recent months. "Just several" showed up in May, he said; none came in June. Jin, who in the past sheltered several North Koreans for a number of years and regularly tended to walk-ins, noted that his May walk-ins were not new arrivals to China. He said they had actually been in China for "a while" and largely sought some transportation money. Father LIAN Changyuan (protect) of Yanji's official Catholic Church, another clergyman who in the past has given succor to border-crossers, told Poloff later the same day that he, too, had recently come across "very few"--especially when compared to the late 1990s, when he received as many as ten new arrivals per day in Helong/Longjing, south of Yanji.

15. (C) Others in recent months have reported higher flows. In early April, for instance, Yanbian University of Science and Technology (YUST) President James Kim (protect) claimed to be assisting 100-200 border-crossers per month. Another knowledgeable YUST professor told Poloff in late June, however, that there nevertheless seemed to be fewer arrivals recently, though he was unclear why. Many are equally uncertain. KIM Jong Han (protect), who handles the refugee account for the ROK Consulate in Shenyang, has also noted an anecdotal decrease. In a conversation with Poloff on June 25, he ascribed the drop-off to strengthened patrols on both sides of the border since last fall/winter, but he, too, acknowledged that other factors may be at

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play.

NORTH KOREAN DRUGS FURTHER NORTH ALONG THE BORDER

16. (C) Months into an anti-drug campaign, authorities in Jilin Province are announcing more seizures of narcotics from a number of areas directly along the PRC-DPRK border. Newspapers in the Yanbian Ethnic Korean Autonomous Prefecture have recently publicized a spate of busts in PRC-DPRK border localities (e.g., Helong, Longjing) made between December and late June--some quite large, often involving ethnic Korean Chinese caught trafficking methamphetamines allegedly bought from "people from outside the (Chinese) border" (jingwai ren yuan). On the ground, small reminders of the drug problem in Yanbian's border towns are periodically visible. On the road that snakes along the PRC-DPRK border linking Nanping and Chongshan, for instance, Poloff on June 21 observed a number of signs specifically warning that the trafficking of drugs (and smuggling more generally) is illegal.

17. (C) Jilin officials became noticeably uneasy when asked about the province's "Spring Thunder" campaign. Jilin Province's Executive Deputy Governor, TIAN Xueren, told Poloff on June 1 that the province's drug problem--particularly the trafficking of methamphetamines--is most pronounced in the "border region." But Tian, a former high-level Yanbian official, demurred when pressed on the source of the drugs afflicting Jilin. He offered only that the source was "outside of China."

BORDER FENCING EXTENDED NEAR DANDONG

18. (C) For the first time in many months, PRC authorities near Dandong have extended fencing on the Chinese side of the PRC-DPRK border. In Hushan (approximately 20 kilometers north of Dandong) on June 26, Poloff observed a relatively small new section of fencing added since his visit in early May. Less than a kilometer long and identical in structure to the other sections, the new fencing--unlike other parts of the preexisting stretch in

Hushan--features at least two small built-in doors lockable with padlocks. Poloff spotted one door wide open; a local fisherman passed easily through the other, making his way down to the Yalu River just below.

PLA MILITARY ACTIVITY

19. (C) Slightly north of Dandong, Poloff continued to observe a slightly more robust level of military activity compared with prior visits before May of this year. Along the Yalu River several kilometers north of Dandong (about halfway between the city proper and Hushan) Poloff at approximately 1400 on June 26 observed a People's Liberation Army (PLA) boating and bridging exercise on the banks of the Yalu River. Assembled on the riverbank were approximately two companies of what appeared to be engineering troops--some wearing life jackets--flanked by a small number of parked convoy trucks; a number of portable bridge segments floated in the water. (NOTE: Poloff for the first time encountered a similar exercise, with comparable numbers, in the same location on May 8 at approximately 1000. END NOTE.) Slightly north of the riverside exercise site, Poloff between 1400 and 1430 in Hushan observed a convoy of approximately 20-25 PLA cargo/utility trucks, most without plates and marked as "practice" vehicles; others contained proper Shenyang Military Region plates. Meanwhile, a five-person PLA patrol armed with machine guns walked the PRC-DPRK border near Hushan.

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